

CENTRAL BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT
FORT SMITH, ARKANSAS

Tuesday, December 18, 2018
Area Agency on Aging building, 524 Garrison Avenue
Fort Smith, Arkansas
7th Floor Board Room

Meeting Minutes

The Fort Smith Central Business Improvement District Commission's regular meeting was scheduled for 9:30 a.m. on Tuesday, December 18, 2018 in the 7th floor board room of the Area Agency on Aging building, 524 Garrison Avenue, Fort Smith, Arkansas.

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Bill Hanna, Chair, at 9:34 a.m. and a quorum was noted present. Also in attendance were commissioners Steve Clark, Richard Griffin, Phil White, Sam Sicard and Jeff Pryor. Commissioners Rodney Ghan and Lee Ann Vick were absent and excused by unanimous vote. Others in attendance included Carl Geffken, Chief Nathaniel Clark, Brenda Andrews, Doug Reinert and Jeff Dingman of the City of Fort Smith.

Mr. Sicard moved approval of the minutes of the November 20, 2018 regular meeting. Mr. Pryor seconded and motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Sicard reviewed the Treasurer's report for the month of November 2018, such documents being previously provided by Mr. Sicard for the commissioners' review. As of November 30, 2018, the Total Cash-on-Hand for the CBID amounted to \$60,974.19. Restricted funds comprise \$3,150.00 of the total cash. The total cash net of restricted funds is \$57,824.19. Mr. Griffin moved approval of the Treasurer's report. Mr. White seconded, and the motion carried by unanimous vote.

Talicia Richardson, Executive Director of 64.6 Downtown. provided an update on 64.6 Downtown's activities. Mrs. Richardson expressed gratitude to the city's Sanitation Department, particularly department director Kyle Foreman, in replacing over thirty trash receptacles downtown with new units, and his promise of a plan to maintain them. The prior units were in place for a number of years, and definitely showed their age so the new receptacles were a welcome improvement. Further, Mrs. Richardson noted that there is to be an event celebrating the Gateway Park project this afternoon (December 18) at 2:00 p.m. at 1100 Garrison Avenue. The sculptor for the three bronze statues in the park will be in attendance. She also noted all of the recent downtown activity, particularly the previous Saturday with the Jaycees' Christmas Parade and other events. Further, a New Year's Eve Ball-drop event coordinated by the Downtown Business' Association will take place near First National Bank in the vicinity of Garrison Avenue & North 6th Street. Lastly, she reminded commissioners of the date previously discussed for the CBID's "Town Hall" public meeting: February 19, in the evening. It was noted that the date and time would conflict with the city's board of directors' meeting, so a different date should be considered.

Mr. Hanna reported that the Downtown Traffic & Truck Study kicked off the previous day, with the city's appointed working group meeting with the selected consultant to review the scope and timeline of the project. The project is expected to take eight to nine months. Mr. Hanna referred to the Neighborhood Services reports, and Mr. Dingman advised that the reports are still in the formats previously used, but that the previous suggestions from the CBID for improving the reports were being discussed with staff.

The commission considered a request from 64.6 Downtown to demolish the building at 1300 Garrison Avenue to make way for the Gateway Park project. Mr. Rick Griffin, speaking on behalf of the project, reported that the public/private project has an estimated cost of about \$750,000, and that the organizers are within

\$140,000 of their fundraising goal and confident that they will raise all funds needed. Construction is expected to start by April, earlier if possible. The artwork has been commissioned from the sculptor (who is in town today) and the project is expected to be complete around October 1, 2019. Mr. Clark asked about the timing of the building's demolition, Mr. Rick Griffin replied that it would likely happen when they are ready to start construction immediately when it comes down. Mr. Clark moved approval of the demolition request. Mr. Richard Griffin seconded, and the motion carried by a vote of six in favor, zero opposed.

The commission considered a request for conditional use at 101 North 10th Street submitted by Ms. Carmen Geoates on behalf of her business, Keep It Gypsy. Ms. Andrews reported that the wholesale-only business manufactures leather handbags and has recently moved locations (both within Brunswick Place). The C-6 zoning allows for specialty manufacturing of this type by conditional use, approved by the Planning Commission, and the CBID's recommendation to approve or deny will be forwarded to the Planning Commission to consider. Ms. Andrews further noted that the manufacturing process involves a laser cutting leather, so does tend to produce an odor, resulting in complaints. Ms. Geoates explained that upon approval of her conditional use, she will purchase a filter system that is proven to eliminate such odor. Although she has been in two other locations downtown, the odor has been dealt with and not caused an issue. Mr. Clark asked about the neighbors' recourse if the use is approved, but the odor is still a problem. Ms. Geoates replied that she is confident that the air filtration system will eliminate the problem. Mr. White moved to recommend that the Planning Commission approve the conditional use for Keep It Gypsy. Mr. Clark seconded, and the motion carried by unanimous vote.

Mr. Hanna introduced Fort Smith's city administrator Carl Geffken and chief of police Nathaniel Clark, attending at the commission's invitation to discuss police presence in the downtown. Mr. Geffken explained that balancing the security and safety needs across the city is a challenge. The coverage issues for the police department exist across the city and are related to employee vacancies in the department, the patrol division in particular. The department currently has 19 vacant sworn officer positions, all are funded, but it takes time to recruit, hire and train these officers.

Chief Clark reported that there is currently a civilian employee (parking attendant) downtown on a Segway during most business hours, and that the downtown area is a regular part of two separate patrol beats. Chief Clark explained the "Operation Community First" initiative where every officer in the department is challenged to make at least four new face-to-face contacts with citizens in the community. The department has already met its goal of specific new contacts, despite the vacancies previously mentioned. Chief Clark referenced the former bicycle patrols that were downtown in years past and acknowledged that this type of patrol is needed and is a goal of his to provide, but current staffing levels do not allow for it. Mr. White commented that the bicycle patrol was very well received.

When asked about efforts to hire more officers, Chief Clark referenced the current difficulty for all law enforcement agencies in hiring new people. With a good economy, it is difficult to attract new recruits to the profession of law enforcement for the salaries that municipalities and government agencies can pay. Even agencies that have higher starting salaries and signing bonuses are having difficulty keeping positions filled. Mr. Geffken added that the city's Human Resources will soon be doing a full salary comparison for all city positions, including law enforcement officers, to get a better idea of where the city's salary structure currently sits within the market of both public and private employers.

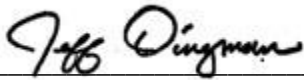
Mr. Hanna asked about increases in law enforcement activity downtown within the last few months, since South Camp has been disassembled. The reply is that the situation is improving, but transients are still in the downtown, and have moved to other areas which now need dealt with. Mrs. Richardson, with a storefront downtown, commented that several uniformed officers have made the effort to enter and interact with businesses and the public, and such efforts are appreciated.

Mr. White suggested that perhaps with the difficulty in hiring and training certified law enforcement officers, perhaps additional civilian employees could be deployed downtown on the Segways to provide some sort of presence. Chief Clark noted that such individuals would not be certified law enforcement and would have to call for assistance from an officer to deal with any type incident. Mr. White acknowledged that it wouldn't be ideal but would be more than is available now.

Mr. Sicard asked about traffic speed enforcement downtown. Mr. Geffken noted the kickoff of the traffic & truck study, but also the deployment of two speed indicators along Garrison. The indicators typically curb travelling speeds, and will be evaluated and moved around accordingly.

The next meeting of the CBID Commission is scheduled for January 15, 2019. The February meeting is scheduled for February 19, and a time and place for the CBID Town Hall meeting needs to be confirmed. There being no additional business before the Commission, the meeting adjourned at approximately 10:09 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jeff Dingman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. Below the signature is a horizontal line.

Jeff Dingman
Deputy City Administrator